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'Public' Broadcasting Overseen By New Agenda-Driven Chairman

Will Programming Choices Suffer from Bias?

By Michael Collins Piper

A hard-line Israeli lobby stalwart who has accused National Public Radio (NPR) of being biased against Israel is now chairman of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), the private corporation that oversees management and funding for NPR and some 1,000 public radio — and television — broadcasting outlets throughout the United States.

On Sept. 26, 2005, Cheryl Halpern, a multimillionaire attorney and real estate developer from New Jersey who has been serving as a member of the CPB board, was elected to the CPB chairmanship by the CPB board that is now dominated by Bush administration loyalists.

Although Halpern has said her goal is to "encourage objective and balanced programming" on the radio and television outlets under the auspices of the CPB, Halpern's public rhetoric betrays her own special interest bias: one of favoritism toward Israel and opposition to criticism of the Middle East state.

During her service on the CPB board Halpern was outspokenly critical of NPR, accusing it of being biased against Israel and its government.

Actually, this is no surprise, since virtually all of Halpern's public affairs activities have been devoted to strengthening the so-called "special relationship" between Israel and the taxpayers of the United States who annually provide billions of dollars in financial and military support to Israel.

Halpern's notable affiliations include:

- Membership on the board of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy — an offshoot of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the famed lobby for Israel, two of whose longtime top executives are now under indictment on espionage charges.

- Membership on the executive committee of the New Jersey Regional Advisory Board of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (where Meryl Chertoff, the wife of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, has also been active in recent years);

- Membership on the New Jersey-Israel Commission, a state agency established "to foster increased economic, scientific, educational and cultural relations" between the state of New Jersey and Israel.

- The Center for Public Policy of B'nai B'rith, which describes itself as "the major link between Israel and B'nai B'rith members and supporters around the world."

Even Celia Wexler, vice president for advocacy at the liberal group Common Cause — which has never been accused of being "anti-Semitic"—has commented about Halpern: "She has been a very ardent, pro-Israeli person. .. . She has a particular point of view. She is entitled to that point of view. The problem is [whether she can] separate that point of view, which is an advocacy point of view, from understanding how journalists do their job, and that their fact-based reporting that sometimes is going to be critical of Israel. And [we are] very concerned about that."

In addition, Halpern's Republican Party affiliations also indicate her special interest The former chairman of the board of directors of the "neo-conservative" Republican Jewish Coalition, Halpern and her husband Fred were ranked, in the 2000 election cycle, as being among the nation's top 100 contributors to political candidates, among them Sen. Sam Brownback (R-Kan.).

The fact that Brownback has been on the receiving end of Halpern's largesse is particularly interesting since, as AFP previously pointed out, Brownback was involved in a failed scheme — along with Sen. Rick Santorum (RPenn.) — to set up a mechanism to scuttle federal funding to colleges and universities that were found to be allowing professors and students to make comments critical of Israel and U.S. political favoritism for Israel.

Brownback openly suggested setting up a federal commission charged with the responsibility of investigating incidents of so-called "anti-Semitism" on American campuses.

Photograph of Cheryl Halpern.
Caption: **"A SPECIAL INTEREST:** If you listened to public radio recently you may have been surprised at how much it promoted the government's agenda. One explanation for this could be found in the fact that individuals like Cheryl Halpern pictured above with ties to special interest groups have taken over the board that oversees what is played on the radio."

A journalist specializing in media critique, Michael Collins Piper is the author of ***Final Judgment***, the controversial "underground bestseller" documenting the collaboration of Israeli intelligence in the assassination of John F. Kennedy. He is also the author of ***The High Priests of War***, ***The New Jerusalem***, ***The Judas Goats***, and ***Dirty Secrets***, all available from America First Books and First Amendment Books. He has lectured on suppressed topics in places as diverse as Malaysia, Japan, Canada, Russia and Abu Dhabi.

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